

CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL

OF POPULAR LITERATURE

Science and Arts.

CONDUCTED BY WILLIAM AND ROBERT CHAMBERS.

No. 167.

SATURDAY, MARCH 14, 1857.

PRICE 11d.

THE SPAN OF LIFE.

THIS fashion is to moralise on the speedy metamorphosis of the muling and puking child into the lean and slipped pantaloons. The swift and merciless approach of death, kicking at the door of cottage and palace with impartial foot, and interrupting alike the plans of the governed and the governor, the ignoramus and the scholar, is often dwelt upon with something like affectionate pathos, not unfrequently in a tone of querulous reflection. Mr Growler, a very worthy and practical gentleman, embodies his sentiments somewhat in this fashion: 'Threescore years and ten are equivalent to forty and odd years of self-consciousness, representing my twenty and odd years of activity. When this short period has elapsed, the spring of life has run itself completely down. If native centrifugal energy keep the machine moving yet a little while, it jerks and creaks like a rusty fly-wheel.' A plaintive statistician perchance adds, that the term of life mentioned by the psalmist, and adopted by Mr Growler, is considerably over the average derived from the tables of mortality. The poets, with grand parade of metaphor and trope, flourish of mournful trumpets, and wailing of Æolian lyres, follow in the wake of the same idea; and so sentimental humanity makes capital of the evanescence of life. It may be worth while to inquire how far this reflection is philosophically correct and practically useful.

Things temporal must ever shrink into nothingness in the presence of things eternal. The solemn voice of religion warns us of the infinite expanse lying beyond finite time, and of the infinite possibilities folded in the breast of the future. Yet we may reasonably question, whether the grave import of this warning would be lessened to contemplative minds though the span of mundane existence were lengthened to five hundred years. Let us imagine such an order of things to exist, and that our friend Mr Growler has reached his grand climacteric of four hundred years, and is engaged in meditation on the fleeting nature of sublunary things. Is it not likely that the decline of life would appear to him precipitous and sudden, and the slopes of memory terribly foreshortened in the mental review? Without much strain upon the fancy, we may suppose that Methuselah in his green old age sometimes mourned over the premature decease of a contemporary cut-off in the flower of youth at the age of fifteen score years, after a lingering illness of rather more than a century. Whatever the given term of human life might be, the boundless margin of darkness lying around it, and the doubtful eventualities of

pestilence and disease, would still render needful the illumination and solace of religious faith.

In actual life, we do not find men much impressed with the brief duration of their probable career. The jubilant spirit of youth, and the calm strength of manhood, are tempered by the uncertainty rather than the brevity of existence; and trustfulness so moderates even this sense of uncertainty, that it does not interfere, in healthy minds, with the steady and laborious pursuits of earthly aims, although it is sufficient to furnish food for reflection, and stimulate to a holier purpose. The Supreme Will has thus ordained with beneficent intention, for history teaches us that the assurance or strong probability of untimely dissolution operating on large communities of men, is the reverse of beneficial to their moral and religious nature. The plague of Athens in the classic era, and that which desolated the cities of Europe in the middle ages, afford this lesson. In the pages of Thucydides and Boccaccio, is ample proof that the result of such a feeling is moral disorganisation and reckless despair. The wisdom of faith becomes supplanted by the shallow philosophy—'Let us eat, drink, and be merry, for to-morrow we die.' But in a normal state, such a presentiment does not predominate. The child regards life as of vague, indefinite extent; youth is confident of a sufficient career; and the patriarch, reposing on his honours, and receiving the reverence of a new generation, still hopes to add more years to the winter of his age. The uncertainty of life, and the certainty of death, operate, independently of the rapid efflux of time, to teach humility to the human heart.

Strictly speaking, however, life is incommensurable with length of days and the flight of seasons. We do not sail over life's solemn main with the uniform velocity of an astronomical rotation. If the log be thrown over from time to time into the current of life, we shall observe great variation in the number of knots per hour that we make; and in order to determine the space traversed, we must calculate the rate of progress as well as the duration of the voyage. How much of our course do we pass over in half an hour? It may be, we float but lazily upon the sluggish waters; it may be, we bound along before the breeze of passion. Half an hour waiting for the train, half an hour in the society of a brilliant woman, half an hour on the eve of battle, half an hour with a guilty conscience, half an hour with the reward of virtue, half an hour with half a hundred other thoughts, persons, and things, cannot be reckoned as equal elements of what we call our life. We might as well estimate quantity of electricity by the duration of the lightning's flash, or the cubical contents of ocean by the beating of the

surge. Days are but the ripples of the sea of life, and years its long heaving swells.

The astronomical clock does not mark the epochs of existence, else why should we 'count the gray barbarian less than the Christian child.' The truth is, time is no more a correct measure of life than of light, heat, or magnetism. It measures the duration of an external phenomenon with reference to other phenomena also external, but not with reference to subjective feeling. Neither the quantity nor quality of our vitality can be estimated by the lapse of time. Life can only be rightly measured, in quantity, by the succession and number of ideas; in quality and intensity, by their nature and degree. Estimated by this rule, which of them shall we say has lived the most—Milton or Methuselah, Newton or Old Parr, Shakspeare or Jenkins, Alexander von Humboldt or the eldest of the last list of centenarians recorded by the *Blankshire Chronicle*? A modern writer has remarked on the immense amount of thought that soft pulpy mass we call the brain can secrete before its functions cease. Fancy how many folio volumes, double-columned, and in diamond type, would be filled, were we to note down—which Heaven forbid!—the rank and file of ideas, good strong lusty notions, too, that have passed through the cranium of John Smith for the last twenty years! We wish some savant, of an arithmetical turn, would calculate the number of years which would glide away in a persevering endeavour to catalogue, according to the concisest method, the thoughts of an average octogenarian. The letter A of such an inventory would outrival its renowned namesake of the British Museum. All the labours of Hercules would be light as a lady's crochet-work, compared with the enormous enterprise. It is the boast of sanitary reformers, and not without justice, that the average duration of human life in this country has been augmented of late years by better air, food, dwellings, and apparel. We may fairly congratulate ourselves on the fact, although the work of amelioration is as yet only half accomplished. The genius of disease, avoiding the light of science, skulks in our lanes and alleys, and, with God's help, shall be ultimately caught in a *cul de sac*, and restrained with the bounds of His divine authority. We ought to be thankful for what has been achieved; but, at the same time, not disguise from ourselves that the earthly sum of human life is enhanced infinitely more by better mental culture, ready access to hoarded wisdom, rapid and facile interchange of thought, than by the addition of a few uncertain and weary years to the lease of existence. Sanitary improvements supply, as it were, oil to the wheels of life and polish to their centres, or remove obstacles to their free motion, and the wear and tear of the material are thereby diminished; whereas improved culture may be likened to improved machinery. It is the spiritual power-loom by which ideas are fabricated and multiplied with wonderful speed and at inconsiderable cost, while a comely and tasteful pattern is woven into the web of life for the raiment of the soul.

'Art is long, and life is fleeting.' True, Mr Poet, and yet what a spacious edifice of art, science, and learning may be raised in this fleeting life! The mantle of his ancestors does not yet hang too loosely on the stalwart limbs of Prince Posterity. Genius in its hot youth is still able to foray beyond the frontiers of actual knowledge, and bring in spoils from the darkness. The vast amount of good or evil that a short-lived, evanescent mortal can achieve before he passes away, is a continual testimony against grumbling and discontent about the trivial duration of our pilgrimage. Those whose hours are cast away and bear no fruit, will certainly find the term allotted to them brief enough; but if any man labour with a true heart and high purpose, he will

generally find, whatever may be his vocation, ample opportunity to accomplish the beneficent ends of his being. Only prodigal and thriftless servants need be reminded how few are the hours of day that remain to them ere the night cometh. If we use a wise economy, thirty years of good energetic action are no mean appanage. There is space enough, Heaven knows, for all industriously 'working in the walls of Time' to build for the indwelling of virtue a temple of good works, or, for its charnel-house, a pyramid of hideous iniquity. What matters it if life be but for a moment, when that moment can contain so much? Why, when a spirit has passed behind the curtain, do we inquire how many years did he wear his mortal coil? Let our question rather be, how much or how little did he live? After all, the heroes of history, thinkers and doers, are not remarkable for longevity. There is no time to waste, but plenty of time to labour, so let every man proceed cheerily on his journey of life, 'without hurry, without rest.'

THE WAR-TRAIL:

A ROMANCE.

CHAPTER XXXV.—EL ZORRO.

THE new object of dread was a large gun, which had been brought upon the ground by one of those lately arrived. In all probability, it belonged to El Zorro, as it was in his hands we first observed it. It appeared to be a long musket, or elephant-gun, such as the 'roers' in use among South African hunters. Whatever sort of weapon it was, we soon found to our annoyance that it pitched an ounce of lead nearly twice as far as any of our rifles, and with sufficient precision to make it probable that, before the sun had set, El Zorro would be able to pick off our horses, and perhaps ourselves, in detail. It would be half an hour before darkness could screen us with its friendly shelter, and he had already commenced practice. His first shot had been fired. The bullet struck the cliff close to my own head, scattering the fragments of gypsum rock about my ears, and then fell, flattened like a Spanish dollar, at my feet.

The report was far louder than that of either carbine or escopette; and an ejaculation from Rube, as he saw the effect of the shot, followed by his usual ominous whistle, told that the old trapper was not disposed to make light of this new piece of ordnance. Neither was Garey. His look testified to what all three of us were thinking—which was, that this mode of attack was likely to put us in a more awkward dilemma than we had yet been placed in. El Zorro might shoot us down at his leisure. With our rifles, we could neither answer his fire, nor silence it. Our peril was obvious.

The salteador had delivered his first shot 'off hand,' for we had seen him level the piece. Perhaps it was fortunate for us he had not taken aim over a 'lean,' but fortune from that source was not going to favour us any farther; for we now observed Ijorra stick two lances obliquely in the ground, so as to cross each other at a proper height, thus forming as perfect a rest as marksman could have desired.

As soon as the gun was reloaded, El Zorro knelt behind the lances, placed his barrel in the fork, and once more took aim.

I felt satisfied he was aiming at me, or my horse. Indeed, the direction of the long dark tube would have told me so; but I saw Ijorra directing him, and that made me sure of it. I had little fear for myself. I

was sheltered sufficiently, but I trembled for the brave horse that shielded me.

I waited with anxious heart. I saw the blaze of the priming as it puffed upward; the red flame projected from the muzzle, and simultaneously I felt the shock of the heavy bullet striking upon my horse. Splinters of wood flew about my face; they were fragments of the saddle-tree. The ball had passed through the pommel, but my noble steed was untouched! It was a close shot, however—too close to allow of rejoicing, so long as others of the like were to follow.

I was getting as 'riled' as Rube himself, when, all at once, a significant shout from the old trapper drew my attention from El Zorro and his gun. Rube was on my right, and I saw that he was pointing along the bottom of the cliff to some object in that direction. I could not see what it was, as his horses were in the way; but the next moment I observed him hurrying them along the cliff, at the same time calling to Garey and myself to follow.

I lost no time in putting my horse in motion, and Garey as hastily trotted after.

We had not advanced many paces before we comprehended the strange behaviour of our companion.

Scarcely twenty yards from where we had first halted, a large rock rested upon the plain. It was a fragment that had fallen from the cliff, and was now lying several feet from its base; it was of such size, and in such a position, that there was ample space behind it to shelter both men and horses—room for us all!

We were only astonished we had not observed it sooner; but this was not to be wondered at, for its colour corresponded exactly with that of the cliff, and it was difficult, even at twenty yards' distance, to distinguish it from the latter. Besides, our eyes, from the moment of our halting, had been turned in another direction.

We did not stay to give words to our surprise; but hurrying our horses along with us, with joyful exclamations we glided behind the rock.

It was not an echo of our joy, but a cry of disappointed rage, that pealed along the line of the guerrilla. They saw at once that their long gun would no longer avail them, and both Ijurra and his marksman were now seen dancing over the ground like madmen. El Zorro's *métier* was at an end.

A more perfect 'harbour of refuge' could not have been found in all prairie-land. As Garey alleged, it 'beat tree-timber all hollow!' A little fortress, in fact, in which we might defy even twice the number of our assailants—unless, indeed, they should wax desperately brave, and try us hand to hand.

Our sudden disappearance had created a new sensation in their ranks. From their shouts, we could tell that some of them regarded it with feelings of wonder—perhaps with emotions of a still stronger kind. We could hear the exclamations '*Carrai!*' '*Carrambo!*' with the phrase '*los demonios!*' passing from mouth to mouth. Indeed, from the position which they occupied, it must have appeared to them that we had gone into the cliff! The separation of the rock from the wall behind it was not perceptible from the plain, else we should have perceived it as we rode forward.

If our enemies knew of this outlying boulder, it was strange they had left the way open to so safe a retreat—strange, since it did not correspond with the cunning they had otherwise given proofs of—and yet stranger they should be ignorant of its existence. Most of them were natives of this frontier, and must have frequently visited the mesa, which was one of the 'lions' of the district. Perhaps they had never troubled their thoughts about it. There is no people who take less interest in the rare features of their beautiful country than the Mexicans. Nature charms

them not. A Mexican dwelling with a garden around it is a rarity—a lawn or a shrubbery is never seen; but indeed nature has bounteously supplied them with all these. They dwell amidst scenes of picturesque beauty; they gaze over green savannas—down into deep barrancas—up to the snow-crowned summits of mighty mountains—without experiencing one emotion of the sublime. A tortured bull, a steel-galved cock, Roman candles, and the Chinese wheel, are to them the sights of superior interest, and furnish them with all their petty emotions. So is it with nations, as with men who have passed the age of their strength, and reached the period of senility and second childhood.

But there was another, and perhaps a better, reason why none of our adversaries should be intimate with the locality. As my companions alleged, the spot was a favourite halting-place of the Comanches—they have an eye for the picturesque—but perhaps the existence of a spring that was near had more to do in guiding the preference of these 'lords of the prairies.' The mesa, therefore, had for years been dangerous ground, and little trodden by the idle curious. Possibly not one of the heroes we saw before us had for years ventured so far out upon the plains.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

A PLAN OF ESCAPE.

If our enemies were awed by our sudden disappearance, it was soon robbed of its mysterious character. Our faces, and the dark barrels of our rifles, visible around the edges of the white rock, must have dispelled all ideas of the supernatural. Having hastily disposed of our horses, we had placed ourselves thus—in case of a charge being made—though of this we had no longer any great apprehension; and still less as we watched the movements of our adversaries.

El Zorro continued for some time to fire his big gun—the bullets of which we could dodge as easily as if they had been turnips hurled at us—and the leaden missiles fell harmlessly at our feet. Seeing this, the saltador at length ceased firing, and with another, rode off in the direction of the settlements, no doubt on some errand.

One pair of eyes was sufficient to watch the movements of the besiegers. Garey undertook this duty, leaving Rube and myself free to think over some plan of escape.

That we were not to be attacked was now certain. We had the choice, then, of two alternatives—either to keep the position we were in till thirst should force us to surrender, or attack *them*, and by a bold *coup* cut our way through their line. As to the former, we well knew that thirst would soon compel us to yield. Hunger we dreaded not. We had our knives, and before us a plentiful stock of that food on which the prairie wanderer often sustains life. 'Horse-beef' we had all eaten, and could do so again; but for the sister-appetite—thirst—we had made no provision. Our gourd-canteens were empty—had been empty for hours—we were actually pushing for the *mesa spring* when the enemy first came in sight. We were then athirst; but the excitement of the skirmish, with the play of passion incident thereto, had augmented the appetite, and already were we a prey to its keenest pangs. We mumbled as we talked, for each of us was chewing the leaden bullet. Thirst, then, we dreaded even more than our armed enemy.

The other alternative was a desperate one—now more desperate than ever, from the increased number of our foes. To cut our way through them had no other signification than to fight the whole party hand to hand; and we regretted we had not done so when only eleven were opposed to us.

A little reflection, however, convinced us that we were

in a yet better position. We could make the attempt in the darkness. Night would favour us to some extent. Could we succeed by a bold dash in breaking through their deployed line, we might escape under the friendly cover of darkness, and the confusion consequent upon the *mélée*.

There was probability in this. The boldest was clearly the wisest course we could pursue. Desperate it appeared. One or other of us might fall, but it offered the only hope that any of us might get free, for we knew that to surrender was to be shot—perhaps worse—*tortured*.

We had but faint hopes of a rescue; so faint, we scarcely entertained them. I knew that my friends, the rangers, would be in search of me. Wheatley and Hollingsworth would not give me up without making an effort for my recovery; but then the search would be made in a different direction—that in which I had gone, and which lay many miles from the route by the mesa. Even had they thought of sending to the mound, the search must have been already made, and the party returned from it. Too long time had elapsed to make any calculation on a chance like this. The hope was not worth holding, and we held it not.

For some time, Rube and I thought in combination, canvassing the details of the plan that had offered. After a while, we stood apart, and each pursued the train of his own reflections.

I declare that in that hour I had more painful thoughts than those that sprung from the peril of my situation; this I solemnly declare.

I have already said, that when I first recognised the leader of the guerrilla, I experienced an unpleasant suspicion. Since then, I had not time to dwell upon it—self-preservation engrossing all my thoughts. Now, that I found more leisure for reflection, the dire doubt returned in full strength, and I bitterly pondered upon it. Need I name the subject of my wretched reflections? Isolina de Vargas!

Knew *she* of this? Knew she that Ijurma was the chief of a guerrilla? Her cousin—share of the same roof—she could scarcely be ignorant of it! Who set him on our trail? Oh, bitter thought! was the hunt of the wild-horse a *ruse*—a scheme—to separate me from my command, and thus render it an easier prey to the Mexican guerrilleros? Perhaps my straggling followers were by this cut off? Perhaps the post had been attacked by a large body of the enemy—captured? I was not only to lose life, but had already lost my honour. I, the proud captain of a boasted troop, to be thus entrapped by artifice—the artifice of a woman!

My heart, overwhelmed with such bitter fancies, stayed not to reason.

Presently followed a calmer interval, and I began to discuss the probability of my suspicions. What motive could she have to plot my destruction? Surely not from any feeling of love for her country, and hatred towards its enemies? From all I had learned, no such sentiment existed in her mind, but rather an opposite one—a truer patriotism. She was a woman of sufficient aim and intellect to have a feeling one way or the other; but had I not good grounds for believing her a friend to our cause; a foe to the tyrants we would conquer? If otherwise, I was the victim of profound deception and unparalleled hypocrisy!

Perhaps, however, her feeling was personal, not national. Was I alone the object of her hatred? Had I done aught by word or deed to call forth her antagonism—to deserve such cruel vengeance? If so, I was sadly ignorant of the fact. If she hated me, she hated one who loved *her*, with his whole soul absorbed in the passion. But no, I could not think that I was an object of hatred to her. Why should she hate me? How could she?

I could think of but one motive why she should make herself instrumental in the accomplishment of my ruin. It was explicable only on the presumption that she was attached to Ijurma—that Rafael Ijurma was the lord of her heart. If so, he could easily bend it to his will—for this is but the sequence of the other—could influence her to whatever act.

As for Ijurma, there was motive enough for his hostility, even to the seeking of my life. The insult put upon him at our first meeting—the knowledge that I loved *her*—for I was certain he knew it—with the additional fact that I was an enemy—one of the invaders—of his country. These were sufficient motives, though, doubtless, the two first far outweighed the other: with Rafael Ijurma, revenge and jealousy were stronger passions than patriotism.

Then came consolation—thoughts of brighter hue. In the face of all was the fact, that the *white steed* had been found, and captured! There stood the beautiful creature before my eyes. There was no deception in that—there could be none—no scheme could have contrived a contingency so remarkable.

Ijurma might easily have known of the expedition without *her* agency. Its result he would have learned from the returned vaqueros. He had time enough then to collect his band, and set after me. Perhaps she even knew not that he was a leader of guerrilleros? I had heard that his movements were shrouded in mystery—that mystery which covers the designs of the adventurer. He had served in the school of Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna—fit master of deception. Isolina might be innocent even of the knowledge of his acts.

I re-read Isolina's letter, weighing every word. Strange epistle, but natural to the spirit that had dictated it. In its pages I could trace no evidence of treason. No; Isolina was loyal—she was true!

CHAPTER XXXVII.

ELIJAH QUACKENBOSCH.

While these reflections were passing through my mind, I was standing, or rather leaning, with my back against the boulder, and my face towards the wall of the mesa. Directly in front of me was a recess or indentation in the cliff, carried groove-like upward, and deepening as it approached the summit. It was a slight gorge or furrow, evidently formed by the attrition of water, and probably the conduit of the rain that fell upon the table surface of the mound.

Though the cliffs on each side were perfectly vertical, the gorge had a considerable inclination; and the instant my eyes rested upon it, it occurred to me that the precipice at this point could be scaled!

Up to this moment, I had not thought of such a thing; for I had been under the impression—from what my companions had told me—that the summit of the mesa was inaccessible.

Rousing myself to more energetic observation, I scrutinised the cliff from base to summit; and the more I regarded it, the stronger grew my conviction that, without great difficulty, an active climber might reach the top. There were knob-like protuberances on the rock that would serve as footholds, and here and there, small bushes of the trailing cedar hung out from the seams, that would materially assist any one making the ascent.

While scanning these peculiarities, I was startled by observing several abrasions on the face of the rock. These marks appeared quite fresh, and evidently made by some other agency than that of the elements.

After a short examination, I became convinced that they were marks made by a human foot—the scratches of a strong-soled shoe. Beyond a doubt, the cliff had been scaled!

My first impulse was to communicate the discovery to my companions; but I forbore for a while—in order to satisfy myself that the person who had made this daring attempt had actually succeeded in reaching the summit.

Twilight was on, and I could get only an indistinct view of the gorge at its upper part, but I saw enough to convince me that the attempt had been successful.

What bold fellow had ventured this? and with what object? were the questions I naturally asked myself.

Vague recollections were stirring within me; presently they grew more distinct, and all at once I was able to answer both the interrogatories I had put. I knew the man who had climbed that cliff. I only wondered I had not thought of him before!

Among the many odd characters in the piebald band, of which I had the honour to be chief, not the least odd was one who answered to the euphonious name of 'Elijah Quackenboss.' He was a mixture of Yankee and German, originating somewhere in the mountains of Pennsylvania. He had been a schoolmaster among his native hills—had picked up some little book-learning; but what rendered him more interesting to me was the fact that he was a botanist. Not a very scientific one, it is true; but in whatever way obtained, he possessed a respectable knowledge of *flora* and *sylva*, and evinced an aptitude for the study not inferior to Linnaeus himself. The more surprising was this, that such inclinations are somewhat rare among Americans—but Quackenboss no doubt drew his instincts from his Teutonic ancestry.

If his intellectual disposition was odd, not less so was his physical. His person was tall, crooked, and lanky; and none of those members that should have been counterparts of each other seemed exactly to match. His arms were odd ones—his limbs were unlike; and all four looked as if they had met by accident, and could not agree upon anything. His eyes were no better mated, and never consented to look in the same direction; but with the right one, Elijah Quackenboss could 'sight' a rifle, and drive in the nail at a hundred yards' distance.

From his odd habits, his companions—the rangers—regarded him as hardly 'square;' but this idea was partially derived from seeing him engaged in his botanical researches—an occupation that to them appeared simply absurd. They knew, however, that 'Dutch Lige'—such was his sobriquet—could shoot 'plum center;' and notwithstanding his quiet demeanour, had proved himself 'good stuff' at the bottom; and this shielded him from the ridicule he would otherwise have experienced at their hands.

Than Quackenboss, a more ardent student of botany I never saw. No labour retarded him in the pursuit. No matter how wearied with drill or other duties, the moment the hours became his own, he would be off in search of rare plants, wandering far from camp, and at times placing himself in situations of extreme danger. Since his arrival on Texan ground, he had devoted much attention to the study of the *cactaceæ*, and now having reached Mexico, the home of these singular endogens, he might be said to have gone cactus-mad. Every day his researches disclosed to him new forms of cactus or cereus, and it was in connection with one of these that he was now recalled to my memory. I remembered his having told me—for a similarity of tastes frequently brought us into conversation—of his having discovered, but a few days before, a new and singular species of *mammillaria*. He had found it growing upon a *prairie mound* which he had climbed for the purpose of exploring its botany, adding at the same time that he had observed the species only upon the top of this mound, and nowhere else in the surrounding country.

This mound was our mesa. It had been climbed by Elijah Quackenboss!

If he, awkward animal that he was, had been able to scale the height, why could not *we*?

This was my reflection; and without staying to consider what advantage we should derive from such a proceeding, I communicated the discovery to my companions.

Both appeared delighted; and after a short scrutiny declared the path practicable. Garey believed he could easily go up; and Rube in his terse way said, that his 'jeints wa'n't so stiff yit;' only a month ago he had 'clomb a wuss-lukin bluff than it.'

But now the reflection occurred, to what purpose should we make the ascent? We could not escape in that way! There was no chance of our being able to descend upon the other side, for there the cliff was impracticable. The behaviour of the guerrilleros had given proof of this. Some time before, Ijorra, with another, had gone to the rear of the mound, evidently to reconnoitre it, in hopes of being able to assail us from behind. But they had returned, and their gestures betokened their disappointment.

Why, then, should we ascend, if we could not also descend on the opposite side? True, upon the summit we should be perfectly safe from an attack of the guerrilla, but not from *thirst*, and this was the enemy we now dreaded. Water would not be found on the top of the mesa. It could not better our situation to go there; on the contrary, we should be in a worse 'fix' than ever. So said Garey. Where we were, we had our horses—a spare one to eat when that became necessary, and the others to aid us in our attempt to escape. Should we climb the cliff, these must be left behind. From the top was less than fifty yards, and our rifles would still cover them from the clutch of our enemies, but to what advantage? Like ourselves, they must in time fall before thirst and hunger.

The gleam of hope died within us, as suddenly as it had sprung up.

It could in nowise serve us to scale the cliff: we were better in our present position; we could hold that so long as thirst would allow us. We could not do more within the granite walls of an impregnable fortress.

This was the conclusion at which Garey and I had simultaneously arrived.

Rube had not yet expressed himself. The old man was standing with both hands clutching his long rifle, the butt of which rested upon the ground. He held the piece near the muzzle, partially leaning upon it, while he appeared gazing intently into the barrel. This was one of his 'ways' when endeavouring to unravel a knotty question; and Garey and I, knowing this peculiarity on the part of the old trapper, remained silent—leaving him to the free development of his 'instincts.'

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

RUBE'S PLAN.

For several minutes, Rube preserved his meditative attitude, without uttering a word or making the slightest motion. At length, a low but cheerful whistle escaped his lips, and at the same time his body became erect.

'Eh? what is 't, old boy?' inquired Garey, who understood the signal, and knew that the whistle denoted some discovery.

Rube's reply was the interrogatory: 'How long's yur trail-rope, Bill?'

'It are twenty yards—good mizyure,' answered Garey.

'An yurs, young fellur?'

'About the same length—perhaps a yard or two more.'

'Good!' ejaculated the questioner, with a satisfied look. 'We'll fool them niggurs yit—we will!'

'Hooraw for you, old boy! you've hit on some plan, hain't you?' This was Garey's interrogatory.

'Sartintly, I hez.'

'Let's have it then, kummarade,' said Garey, seeing that Rube had relapsed into silence; 'thar ain't much time to think o' things'—

'Plenty o' time, Billee! Don't be so durned impatient, boy! Thur's gobs o' time. I'll stake my ole mar agin the young fellur's black hoss, that we'll be out o' this scrape afore sunup. Geehosopha! how thu'll cuss when they finds the trap empy. He, he, he—ho, ho, hoo!'

And the old sinner continued to laugh for some seconds, as coolly and cheerfully as if no enemy was within a thousand miles of the spot.

Garey and I were chafing with impatience, but we knew that our comrade was in one of his queer moods, and it was no use attempting to push him faster than he was disposed to go.

When his chuckling fit was ended, he assumed a more serious air, and once more appeared to busy himself with the calculation of some problem. He spoke in soliloquy.

'Twenty yurds o' Bill's,' muttered he, 'an twenty o' the young fellur's, ur forty; an myen—it ur sixteen yurds—make the hul fifty an six; ye-es, fifty-six preezactly. Then thur's the knots to kum off o' thet, though fornenst 'em thur's bridles. Wagh! thur's rope aplenty, an enough over, to string up half a score o' them yeller-bellies, ef iver I gits holton 'em. An won't I? Wagh!'

During this arithmetical process, Rube, instead of gazing any longer into the barrel of his rifle, had kept his eyes wandering up and down the cliff. Before he had ceased talking, both Garey and myself had divined his plan, but we refrained from telling him so. To have anticipated the old trapper in his disclosure would have been a mortal offence.

We waited for him to make it known.

'Now, boyees!' said he at length, 'hyur's how we'll git elur. Fust an fo'must, we'll crawl up yander, soon's it gits dark enough to kiver us. Seconds, we'll toat our trail-ropes along wi' us. Thuds, we'll jine the three thegither, an ef thet ain't long enough, a kuppel o' bridles'll help out. Fo'th, we'll tie the eend o' the rope to a saplin up thur on top, an then slide down the bluff on t'other side, do ee see? Fift, oncest down on the paraira, we'll put straight for the settlements. Sixt an lastest, when we gits thur, we'll gather a wheen o' the young fellur's rangers, take a bee-line back to the mound, an gie these hyur niggurs sech a lambaystin as they hain't hed since the war begun. Now?'

'Now' meant, what think you of the plan? Mentally, both Garey and I had already approved of it, and we promptly signified our approval. It really promised well. Should we succeed in carrying out the details without being detected, it was probable enough that within a few hours we might be safe in the plazza of the rancheria, and quenching our thirst at its crystal well.

The anticipated pleasure filled us with fresh energy; and we instantly set about putting everything in readiness. One watched, while the other two worked. Our lazoes were knotted together, and the four horses fastened head to head with their bridles, and secured so as to keep them behind the boulder. This done, we awaited the falling of night.

Would it be a dark night? About this we now felt anxious. It was already closing down, and gave promise of favouring us: a layer of lead-coloured clouds covered the sky, and we knew there could be no moon before midnight.

Rube, who boasted he could read weather-sign like a 'salt-sea sailor,' scrutinised the sky.

'Wal, old hoss!' interrogated Garey, 'what do ye think o't? Will it be dark, eh?'

'Black as a bar!' muttered Rube in reply; and then, as if not satisfied with the simile, he added: 'Black as the inside o' a bufler bull's belly on a burnt paraira!'

The old trapper laughed heartily at the ludicrous conceit, and Garey and I could not refrain from joining in the laugh. The guerrilleros must have heard us; they must have deemed us mad!

Rube's prognostication proved correct: the night came down dark and lowering. The leaden layer broke up into black cumulus clouds, that slowly careered across the canopy of the sky. A storm portended; and already some big drops, that shot vertically downward, could be heard plashing heavily upon our saddles. All this was to our satisfaction; but at that moment a flash of lightning illumined the whole arch of the heavens, lighting the prairie as with a thousand torches. It was none of the pale lavender-coloured light, seen in northern climes, but a brilliant blaze, that appeared to pervade all space, and almost rivalled the brightness of day.

Its sudden and unexpected appearance filled us with dismay: we recognised in it an obstacle to our designs.

'Durn the tarnal thing!' exclaimed Rube peevishly. 'It ur wuss than a moon, durn it!'

'Is it goin to be the quick-forky, or the long-blazey?' inquired Garey, with a reference to two distinct modes in which, upon these southern prairies, the electric fluid exhibits itself.

In the former, the flashes are quick and short-lived, and the intervals of darkness also of short duration. Bolts pierce the clouds in straight, lance-like shafts, or forking and zigzag, followed by thunder in loud unequal bursts, and dashes of intermittent rain.

The other is very distinct from this; there are no shafts or bolts, but a steady blaze which fills the whole firmament with a white quivering light, lasting many seconds of time, and followed by long intervals of amorphous darkness. Such lightning is rarely accompanied by thunder, and rain is not always its concomitant, though it was this sort we now witnessed, and rain-drops were falling.

'Quick-forky!' echoed Rube, in reply to his comrade's interrogatory; 'no—dod rot it! not so bad as thet. It ur the blazey. Thur's no thunder, dont'ee see? Wal! we must grope our way up atween the glimpss.'

I understood why Rube preferred the 'blazey'; the long intervals of darkness between the flashes might enable us to carry out our plan.

He had scarcely finished speaking, when the lightning gleamed a second time, and the prairie was lit up like a theatre during the grand scene in a spectacle. We could see the guerrilleros standing by their horses, in cordon across the plain; we could distinguish their arms and equipments—even the buttons upon their jackets! With their faces rendered ghastly under the glare, and their bodies magnified to gigantic proportions, they presented to our eyes a wild and spectral appearance.

With the flash there was no thunder—neither the close quick clap, nor the distant rumble. There was perfect silence, which rendered the scene more awfully impressive.

'All right!' muttered Rube, as he saw that the besiegers still kept their places. 'We must jest grope our way up atween the glimpss; but fast let 'em see we're still hyur.'

We protruded our faces and rifles around the rock, and in this position awaited another flash.

It came, bright as before: the enemy could not fail to have noticed us.

Our programme was already prepared: Garey was

to ascend first, and take up the rope. He only waited for the termination of another blaze. One end of the lazo was fastened round his waist, and the rope hung down behind him.

When the light gleamed again, he was ready; and the moment it went out, he glided forward to the cliff, and commenced his ascent.

O, for a long interval of darkness!

THE THEORY OF BRIGHTON.

It is a custom among everyday folk to regard a 'theory' as something vague, mystical, intangible, cloudy, evanescent, unpractical, useless—something with which a crazy philosopher amuses himself, despite the pitying contempt of all sober, sensible people. The philosophers, however, understand the word differently; they regard a theory as a method of explanation, a process of reasoning, whereby facts are to be intelligibly associated with, and elucidated by, a particular principle. Thus, there is a theory of the moon, a theory of rent, a theory of equations; and there may legitimately be a theory of roasting or boiling, of tailoring or hair-dressing—not a string of incoherent vagaries, but a consistent and persistent chain of links between facts and a principle which is to explain them. Taken in this sense, then, we ask the reader to join us in an inquiry, whether or not there can be a theory of Brighton.

Is it as a place facing the sunny south, breathed upon by warm winds when other places are bleak and chilly?—is it on account of 'the blue, the fresh, the ever free,' sparkling and dancing in the sunlight?—is it because of the magnificent esplanade or cliff-road stretching for nearly three miles parallel with the shore?—is it for the bathing-machines and the water-nymphs; or for the pebbles and Brighton diamonds; or for the downs on which the Amazons do amble and canter?—is it on account of these, or any of these, that Brighton has a theory? All of them have somewhat to do with the matter; but we wish to draw the reader into an admission that the truth lies yet a little deeper.

Our theory of Brighton, then, is, that this favourite watering-place is a *suburb of London*. It is on this principle or proposition that we build the philosophy of the whole matter.

Everybody knows that Brighton was once Brighthelmstone, a little fishing-village 'under the cliff,' or on the tract of beach under the present chain-pier. Raging winds from various quarters frequently disturbed and destroyed the rickety tenements of the fishermen; and currents driving from the west constantly accumulated heaps of shingle on the beach. Indeed, so exposed was the place, that Defoe, writing in 1724, said: 'Brighthelmstone is a poor fishing-town, old built, and on the very edge of the sea, which is very unkind to this town, and, by its continual encroachments, has so gained upon it, that in a little time more the inhabitants might reasonably expect it will eat up the whole town; about a hundred houses having been devoured within a few years past.'

It was about the middle of the same century that Dr Richard Russell began to talk and write concerning the salubrity of Brighthelmstone, and the availability of the spot to those who needed the healing agency of sea-water. Slowly and by degrees did invalids act upon this advice; but the first decided start for the little old place was when, in 1782, the 'finest gentleman in Europe' made its acquaintance. The Prince of Wales, afterwards Prince Regent, and then King George IV., from that year made Brighthelmstone his summer and autumn residence, during a long series of years. To duly accommodate the prince, a 'Marine Pavilion' was commenced in 1784, becoming the nucleus of all that fashion has done for the place in

the subsequent seventy years. The Pavilion at first consisted of a circular building, with a lofty dome resting on pillars, and a range of apartments on each side; but to complete the design, wings were added to the Steyne front in 1802; and other additions were subsequently made. When finished, it became the most singular-looking building, perhaps, in England; fantastic and irregular, and belonging to any kind of architecture that the spectator might please to name. Domes, minarets, pinnacles, turrets, and arches stand thickly clustered—a sort of hybrid among Chinese, Hindoo, Turkish, Alhambraic, and Russian architecture, which drew forth sarcastic comments from many a quarter.

When the lustre of princedom thus began to dazzle, Brighthelmstone hastened to tidy itself, to lop off excrescences, to deck itself with new ornaments—in fact, to become Brighton. Until 1793, the open space called the Steyne was a piece of common land, whereon fishermen were wont to repair their boats and dry their nets; but gentility forbade the continuance of such rude work on such a spot. It was by degrees enclosed with railings, planted with trees and shrubs, and bounded east and west by private houses of substantial character. At a later day, a statue of the presiding genius of the place, George IV., from the chisel of Chantrey, was erected on one part of the Steyne; and still more recently, another part was decked with a 'Victoria Fountain' of very ornate appearance. Brighton now became ambitious; it put forth claims to be a watering-place and port available for steam-vessels. There was no convenient landing-place; and it was thought that if a pier were carried out into deep water, steamers, as well as smaller craft, might be accommodated. They were days in which suspension-bridges were regarded as wonders of mechanical construction; consequently, Captain Brown's 'chain-pier at Brighton,' finished in 1823 at a cost of £30,000, was long a subject of pride and admiration to the townsmen, and, it may be added, still longer a source of loss to the shareholders; for it suffered in many gales, and has not sufficed to attract steamers to an exposed and very shoal beach. In more recent times, it has been little other than a lounge and promenade for visitors.

Passing over all those matters which can be learned from any guide-book, and which need not occupy space or attention here, we come at once to this point—that the theory of Brighton does not rest on royal favour. George the Magnificent passed away; and during William's reign, the Pavilion was in a doubtful state, scarcely certain of its own position. When Victoria became queen, and hastened from one to another of her palaces to see which she liked best, she quickly decided against Brighton; a water-side palace, shut out from the sea by intervening houses, and with no windows to look out upon anything worth looking at; a town in which she could not walk to the cliff or the beach without being surrounded by a gaping crowd—these things did not please a young girl who had ever been fond of scenes of natural beauty. The maiden-queen of 1837 refused to make the pavilion one of her residences; and the matron-queen of 1856 keeps equally aloof from the place. There is not a pleasure-town in the kingdom from which the sovereign more completely holds aback; and so evidently was this abandonment a settled thing, that the crown has sold the Pavilion to the corporation for £53,000, to be used henceforth for holding concerts, assemblies, fêtes, &c.

No, the sunshine of royalty does not afford the explanation; we must go back to our suburban theory. In the stage-coach days, when the Pavilion had not yet lost all chance of remaining a royal palace, Brighton was a pleasure-town for the high-born and wealthy. The distance from London, covered by a brisk six hours' drive, was the shortest to any point

on the sea-side, and was enlivened by a breezy passage over the downs. Brighton was, however, an expensive place for the middle-classes, who rather took the packets down the river to Gravesend and Margate. Meanwhile, the townsmen, mindful of the requirements of aristocratic folk, did their best to supply Brighton with all the needful accommodation. They built a sea-wall along the east cliff, 60 feet high by 18 feet thick at the base, to resist the ravages of the sea, and form a basis for one of the finest carriage-drives in the kingdom; and profitably was the sum of £100,000 thus laid out. They built a Marine Parade, or succession of fine terraces, eastward of the Steyne; and still beyond this a group of magnificent houses called Kemp Town. They stretched the sea-front in like manner westward, until it met the once distant village of Hove; and then overpassed it with the now growing Cliftonville. And this long sea-line of nearly three miles is marked by such an array of squares, crescents, and terraces, as no other sea-side town in the British dominions can equal. They—that is, the townsmen—did all that townsmen could do to provide the lazy luxuries for sea-side pleasure-seekers—baths, bathing-machines, club-houses, news-rooms, bazaars, music-rooms, a theatre, an assembly-room, a race-course, regattas, and so forth. Under the influence of these various attractions, Brighton grew amazingly. In 1801, its population was only 7337; these numbers augmented to 12,012 in 1811, to 24,429 in 1821, and to 40,634 in 1831.

Then came the railway-days, which frightened the builders of the splendid mansions and terraces. A fear was entertained that the cheapening and facilitating of access to Brighton would drive away the noble lords and right honourables, by attracting those of humbler rank and smaller means. If Brighton had been a hundred miles distant from the metropolis instead of fifty, it would be hard to say what effect the railway might have wrought; but it is just because fifty miles is a suburban distance, measured by railway standard, that Brighton has assumed a character to which, perhaps, there is no parallel in Europe, in a town of 50,000 or 60,000 inhabitants.

Let us see how this is. During the busy season, there are twelve or fourteen trains per day from London to Brighton, and about an equal number in opposite directions. The road being direct, and the locomotive service good, the time of transit has been gradually lessened, until it averages little more than an hour and a half. Any Londoner can go and enjoy a day's pleasure, or transact a day's business, at Brighton, and return to the metropolis on the same day. Any Brighton resident can make London the scene of his daily business, and return to Brighton in the evening. The lady of fashion and fortune, without employing her own horses and carriages on a turnpike road, could leave London after a drawing-room at the palace, and reach Brighton to dinner, if so disposed. Her noble spouse might, at a pinch, leave Brighton after dinner, by the nine o'clock evening express, and be in time to vote in the House at eleven; or, reversing the order of things, he might make a three hours' speech in the House early in the evening, and yet be in Brighton to supper. A banker in Lombard Street, or a dealer in tapes and silks in Cheapside, might breakfast in Brighton, start by rail at a quarter to nine, and reach London Bridge station by ten, ready for business. Now, let us remember this—that many of the omnibuses at the outskirts of the metropolis take an equal space of time to reach the Bank. Let the denizens of Kilburn, of Notting-hill, of Kensington, say whether they reach their city premises in quicker time than this Brighton morning express would enable its passengers to do. Active men measure their movements by time rather than by space; they care nothing about the miles; they only look to the

cabalistic Bradshaw symbols, 845—1000; they jump in, and leave the locomotive to do the rest.

But it may be said—though the rail thus virtually extinguishes four-fifths of the space, it does nevertheless involve the expenditure of a larger sum of money. This is true, yet not so true as to disturb the man of easy means. The company has been shrewd enough, too, to see the value of a liberal policy. There are season-tickets, and tickets available for two or three days, and daily tickets, and excursion tickets on two days in the week—there are many ways of angling for the fish successfully, because the fish are very willing to be caught. There is a whole body of philosophy in the advertisement so familiar to all eyes: 'Eight hours at the sea-side.' It goes to the root of the matter at once. A town *must* be in the suburbs if we can go thither after breakfast, spend eight hours, and then return betimes in the evening. It brings the sea-water and the sea-breeze almost to our doors; and the whole social machinery of the day is as easily managed as if the distance were five miles instead of fifty.

Let not this be regarded as a baseless estimate—a mere attempt to say something smart at the expense of verity. Changes which go on gradually around us are scarcely measured at their proper value, until we steadily pass our thoughts over an intervening period, and compare (say) 1856 with 1836, or any other definite date. Doing this in reference to the subject of locomotion to and from the metropolis; and bearing correctly in mind the kinds, and cost, and times of travelling before the railway era—it will, we think, be admitted that places forty or fifty miles distant from the metropolis, are, both for social and for commercial purposes, virtually as near as the suburban villages were before that era commenced.

And this is what we mean by designating Brighton a suburb of the metropolis. That town is the nearest point at which the sea can be reached; it has many of the elements of a pleasure-town, of a health-seeking town; and yet you can travel from that town to London more quickly than you can traverse the 'huge wen' from one extremity to another. Nor do we, in saying this, wish to shew homage to that particular town alone. Brighton must, from its geographical position, continue to be the nearest sea-side place to London; but the principle we are endeavouring to elucidate is supported by a multitude of other places—wherever, in fact, cheap railway rides bring a pleasant spot within an hour or two's distance from the metropolis. At Southend and Gravesend, at Erith and Greenhithe, at Lewisham and Sydenham, at Mitcham and Epsom, at Wimbledon, Richmond, Kew, Windsor, Sunning-hill, Boxhill, Chertsey, Hampton, Harrow, Hornsey, Waltham, Epping—at places so numerous that this column would scarcely contain their names—the principle in question is working out its results day by day, and every day yet more and more. Ten million passengers depart from and arrive at the London Bridge Railway terminus alone, annually—being those who are carried on the various lines belonging to the South-Eastern and the South Coast Companies. If to these be added the millions presented by the termini at Fenchurch Street, Shoreditch, King's Cross, Euston Square, Paddington, and Waterloo Road, some idea may be formed of the daily outgoings and incomings of this vast mass of human beings. Nor would it be just to omit mention of the river-steamers as contributing towards the same general result. Let those who are concerned in the matter determine whether there be commercial wisdom in carrying passengers from London to Margate for 1s. 6d.; all we have to do here, in connection with the present argument, is to know that such has been the case during the past summer, and that 2000 Londoners have on some days made this voyage. And what is yet more wonderful, perhaps, is the maintenance of a full

number of steamers to the very places where the railway accommodation is so complete. During the past summer, there have been nearly twenty steamers between London and Greenwich, making perhaps sixty voyages daily in each direction; and yet the railway trains have also been nearly sixty in number each way. Different companies ran trains to Woolwich, on two railways, one nearly thirty times, and the other nearly sixty times per day, in each direction; in addition to a number of steam-voyages nearly equal to those to Greenwich. Gravesend was supplied with twelve trains per day by one company, and eleven by another, besides several steamers. Up the river, too, the steam-traffic has augmented the accommodation to places served by railways, as well as other places not so served, by the several piers at Vauxhall, Nine Elms, Pimlico, Chelsea, Battersea, Wandsworth, Putney, Hammersmith, Kew, &c.

Theory or no theory, this suburban question is of the highest importance to the wellbeing of the metropolis. Boards of Works and Boards of Health may do what they can, and may do much more than has yet been done; but all their labours would fail to preserve or increase the healthiness of London, if the railways had not furnished to the moving mass facilities for getting away to the green fields and the blue sea. Whether for a day or for a season, it is good to do this; thus the benefit applies, in the end, to all classes but the extreme poor—and they must be poor indeed who, in these cheap days, cannot afford an occasional inhaling of fresh air in the belt of country, fifty miles radius, which now constitutes the suburbs of this huge metropolis.

Perhaps the reader will now admit that there may be such a thing as a theory of Brighton—and that the theory is, that Brighton is one of the suburbs of London.

THREE CHAPTERS OUT OF MY LIFE.

CHAPTER II.

Just at the time when I was about to go to Russia, there came from thence a Mr M—, who had been appointed governor of Yakutsk. When he heard that I was well acquainted with the language and manners of the Yakuts, he sought me out, and made my acquaintance. Although I had very little desire to return, I went back with him to Yakutsk, and this simply because I had the welfare of the Yakuts at heart, and also because I could not fail to remark the strength and vigour of intellect of this new official: at the same time, I had a foreboding that my return would bring forth nothing but trouble and misfortune. The result will shew how correct was this apprehension.

To the south-east of Yakutsk, and at a distance from it of more than 100 kōs, is a tract of land called Udscoi, celebrated as a hunting district. The circumference of Udscoi is about 500 kōs; it is bounded on the east by the Sea of Okhotsk; on the south, by China; and on the north and west, by Nertschinsk, Olekminsk, and Changangy. The province of Yakutsk is so inordinately large, that this district is looked upon as a remote and desert land; through the whole extent of it there are not more than four or five hundred nomadic Tungouses; yet these, on account of their riches and peculiar condition of life, should not be passed over in silence.

At the time of which I speak, a great number of Yakuts and Russians were in the habit of journeying hither, in order to buy furs from the Tungouses, which they could do at a very moderate rate; and they left their own goods in exchange, for which they charged monstrous prices. This gave rise to so much fraud and oppression, that the inhabitants of Udscoi were almost ruined; and other difficulties added to this,

rendered it necessary to send an overseer to Udscoi. I was chosen to fill this situation.

For two months before my departure, I had a great number of documents to write; and this work, together with the preparation for my journey, was only the commencement of the endless trouble that awaited me for the space of a year and a half on my distant travels.

My outfit consisted of three changes of winter-clothing, four changes of summer-clothing, tea, sugar, dried Russian biscuits, meat-pies, guns, gunpowder, and lead, a little rum and spirits, and also meat, and Yakut and Russian butter. All these were packed in leathern bags, each containing two and a half pud (a pud weighs forty-six pounds), or else in wooden chests: after they had been safely covered, so that no water could penetrate the packages, they were bound round with leathern thongs, and divided into so many horse-loads, each load consisting of not more than six puds.

Although it was the month of February, the severity of winter had not begun to diminish. According to an instrument (Reaumur's thermometer) with which the Russians measure the degree of cold, it was below thirty when I left the town of Yakutsk, with the two Cossacks who accompanied me. We travelled as far as Amga—a distance of thirty kōs—in sledges drawn by horses. At Amga we packed our luggage on the backs of seven horses, mounted three ourselves, and accompanied by two guides, proceeded on our journey. The horses were all fat, and consequently full of spirit, so that they would not proceed quietly with their burdens. For this reason, and because we did not wish to overheat them on the first day, we halted at a place not distant more than three kōs (thirty versts) from Amga, where we determined to pass the night.

The guides, first of all, unloaded the horses; they then shovelled away the snow, till they came to the hard ground, when they began searching for dry wood. So soon as this was found, and a fire kindled, they filled the tea-kettle and another larger kettle with snow, in order to get water for cooking; and after we had been thoroughly warmed by the tea, they set to work to prepare a place for the night. To begin, they made a heap of small twigs and branches; over this the saddle-cloths were spread, and on the top of all came a bed of bear-skins. After consuming the supper which was prepared for us, we clothed ourselves warmly for the night, and went to bed; the boots, stockings, and gloves which we had taken off, being completely wet, were buried in deep snow, to draw out the moisture. At break of day we rose, and took our clothes out of the snow, where they had been better dried than they would have been in the house, and hastily dressing ourselves, proceeded to wash with snow, shivering all the time. We made tea with snow-water, and then went on our way. In this manner we continued our journey until the snow had melted.

Here I must remark that one of the greatest hardships of a winter-journey is the undressing one's self and going to bed in the freezing cold; and yet the getting up in the morning, throwing off the thick warm covering, and washing with snow, is fiftyfold more intolerable, and that man must have a frame of iron who can endure it without injury to his health.

I never drink strong exciting liquors, and consequently know nothing of their value to other men, but I believe it would be impossible to maintain life on such journeys if it were not for tea. I am not now taking the Yakuts and Tungouses into consideration, for with these people, who are born and bred on the snow, it is a customary thing to travel for two or three days without any food at all.

After journeying four days, we reached the shore of the great river Aldan, opposite that part where to the right the Utschur flows into it. Here we halted

at the hut of a Tungouse, who told us that, from the entrance of the Uthchur to the place whither we had to travel—an expanse of ten kōs—the snow had fallen to a depth of seven spans,* and that it would be impossible to make our way through it. This intelligence caused us great embarrassment, for we had no instructions to alter our course, and that was the only way of avoiding the snow. Had we done so, we should also have been obliged to go round a distance of twenty kōs, and for want of fodder, must have given up our horses, and taken reindeer. The loads, too, must have been made smaller for the reindeer, but it was impossible to divide them, as we had no more packing-cases or bags to put them into. Consequently, we resolved to proceed along the river Uthchur; and during the two days which we remained in the Yurte, we busied ourselves making snow-shoes. The two horses which were not loaded, we tied up for two whole days without fodder, and on the third we crossed over the Aldan. No sooner had we set foot upon the ice of the Uthchur, than the depth of snow began to impede the pace of our horses.

A guide on snow-shoes went first, leading the two unloaded horses; these plunged forwards so that their entire weight was thrown on the hind-legs, and thus they broke through the hard crust that covered the snow. Our horses were tied together, and followed in single file, keeping in the beaten track of those that preceded them.

We travelled in this manner from early morning until night, but with the greatest exertion could not accomplish more than one kōs. We were therefore ten days travelling over the ten kōs, where the snow lay so deep. During this time, we scarcely ever mounted our horses, for, in consequence of the difficulty they had in keeping their feet or getting on through the snow, it was almost impossible to sit firm in the saddle. Walking, however, produced an insupportable weariness, and for this reason, we, for the most part, laid aside our snow-shoes, and went on foot.

Both banks of the river Uthchur consist of perpendicular rocks. At the foot of these rocks there are here and there small ledges above steep, black, crumbling precipices. It is impossible for a heavily laden horse to mount these precipices; so, when we had decided on halting at any place for the night, we used to throw the packages on the snow which covered the ice of the Uthchur, and lead one horse after another up the precipice. We then turned them loose to scrape their fodder from under the snow. Sometimes they could not scrape away the deep snow of the forest, and then they ate the twigs and young branches of the willow and birch.

We had scarcely overcome the difficulty which the snow had presented, when a new hindrance appeared. The severity of the cold had forced water out of the rocky banks of the Uthchur; it flowed into the river under the ice, which was heaved up by it until it cracked and burst—although twelve or thirteen spans thick—and the water streamed over the surface; so that our horses had to wade up to their knees in water. In some places, this water had frozen over the first ice, and made our way as slippery as glass. It was impossible for unshod horses or reindeer to keep their feet on it; so two of the guides went forward, and made notches in it with their knives and hatchets, and we followed after them on foot. In other places, when we were near the black crumbling precipices, we carried away the dry earth or sand in baskets, and scattered it over the surface of the ice. Nevertheless, every now and then it so happened that there were spaces where no sand was strewn, and no notches had been made; here our sixteen or seventeen horses would slip and fall, the girths break, and the packsaddles and all the

baggage be thrown on the ice. The greater part of the day was often taken up in repairing these accidents.

In the course of our journey, we came to some very wonderful mountains. The severity of the winter's cold had forced water from the summits, which was now flowing down the whole side of the mountains and over the glittering ice which covered them. At sunset, when the rays of the cloudless spring sun fell upon these rocks, they seemed like a many-coloured rainbow, or as if set with flaming jewels. At the foot, there was always standing water, which did not freeze.

There is a river of the name of Agna which falls into the Uthchur on its left side. Travellers turn to the right, and journey along this river.

It was in the month of April that we reached the Agna; and as we went our way along, we suddenly saw in the distance a black moving form on the bank. At first we took it to be an animal; but, drawing nearer, saw that it was a Tungouse, who sat there weeping. After he had stood up and greeted us in his own fashion, he told us his pitiful tale, as follows:

'When I went into the forest yesterday, I found in many parts of it traces of a herd of wild reindeer; so I went back to my family rejoicing greatly at my good-fortune. I cleaned my gun, and put it in good order. Afterwards, I rested a little, and towards midnight, just when the half-melted surface of the snow is again frozen over, I put on my snow-shoes, and led my dog to the place where I had seen the tracks of the reindeer. I waited here two hours for the dawn to break, and smoked my pipe; then, as soon as the footprints of the reindeer were visible in the morning twilight, I let my dog loose, and followed him, running in my snow-shoes. In this manner I kept up with him for more than a kōs, leaping from rock to rock, and springing over stream after stream. At length blood from the feet of the reindeer began to be visible on the fresh frozen snow: and from their faltering pace, it was evident that they were tired out; then I heard the continuous barking of my dog, and knew that I should come up to them in time. But suddenly the bark of my dog was changed to a howl of agony. I started, and my heart beat as though it would have burst. I redoubled my speed, and saw before me, at the distance of two gunshots, two small black scraps lying on the snow covered with blood. Just at the moment that my dog had come up with a large herd of reindeer, and had driven them into a small brook, where he was keeping them until I came up, by barking and running round and round them—two hungry wolves leaped down the steep side of a rock, and seizing him, one by the head, the other by the body, with one gripe tore him in two. The reindeer had escaped, and were all scattered hither and thither.

'My poor dog was seven years old. He first went hunting with me as a puppy of six months old; and for six years he has never let me know a hungry day. I have been offered five reindeer for him, but would not have parted with him for ten. Yesterday I was rich; now, I am the poorest of men. I know not how I dare shew myself to my family; wife and children expect the dog, to stroke and kiss him, and their tears will make my heart bleed anew.'

I could not help the poor man; so after I had tried to console him with a few kind words—that what is past will not return, and that which is empty cannot be filled again, and that hope in God is surer than anything else—I went on my way.

We travelled forward, leaving the Agna behind us. In our way there stood a high mountain, difficult of ascent, which we had to pass over; and on the other side of it lay the Uthchur. When we were within two kōs of the mountain, we met many travellers journeying together; and they told us that the snow lay upon it thirteen spans deep, so that it was quite impassable. However, when we had reached it, our people got

* The span of the thumb and middle-finger.

together about ten horses and ten reindeer from these travellers, and then unloading, proceeded to lead them up the steep side of the mountain, thus breaking through the crust of snow. They themselves were furnished with snow-shoes.

On the following morning, we all, with great difficulty, passed over the mountain.

On the 1st of May, we arrived at the yearly market of Udscoi. At this place of general resort, I collected the yasak, and fulfilled other imperial commissions; then, after resting the horses, which were completely worn out, on the 1st of June we started for Udscoi, taking with us the ten reindeer which we had bought.

The distance from the place of meeting on the Uchur to Udscoi is about fifty kös, but on account of the difficulty of the road, it is reckoned at seventy. The traveller passes from one stream to another, from one river to the next, and climbs mountain after mountain. As it was the rainy season, we had to make the horses and reindeer swim across the rivers; many of them we crossed by the help of a flat-bottomed boat which we built. The ground we passed over was covered with sharp-pointed stones, or else consisted of fathomless mud-holes, never dry.

If once a horse fall into the mud, it can scarcely get out again alone. Our seventeen horses, with their packs, fell in one and all. The guides, wading up to their waists in mud, dragged off the baggage, and piled it up in a dry place; then they made right anything that was broken by the plunging of the horses in the mud; and when these had got out, they were loaded anew. Perhaps they had scarcely gone on for twenty yards, when they would fall in a second time, and the guides had all their trouble over again.

Once, as I was standing up to the waist in mud, holding up the heads of three horses which had fallen in, lest they should sink and be suffocated, a fourth, which could not keep its footing, fell in near me. His head was under two or three times only, but he was dead before any one perceived it. These difficulties were increased by the frightful heat of the sun, and by such myriads of flies, that we could not breathe for them. They swarmed about us especially during meal-time; and no sooner was anything poured into a cup, than they fell in and filled it, even in the moment that you were lifting it to your mouth.

I must give the Yakut guides the well-merited praise of encountering all difficulties without shewing the least ill-temper or dissatisfaction; and yet they do their work for a small sum of money, which does not half repay them for their trouble. And here, in passing, I must make a few remarks on the qualities of these guides. After one of them has completely exhausted his strength during the day by struggling with all kinds of difficulties—mud, water, the heat of the sun, mosquitoes, wasps, and gadflies—he sets to work at midnight to mend his own clothes, and any of the harness that may be broken. By the time this is completed, the horses are cool; he then ties their legs together, and turns them loose to graze; but every half-hour he goes out to see that they are not caught in the bushes, or devoured by any wild beast, so that he never has more than two hours' sleep out of the whole twenty-four.

After we had travelled about ten kös beyond the Uchur, we came to a mountain of the name of Dschugdschur, or the great mountain, which we had been long expecting to reach. It is called the girdle or backbone of the country, because it runs through the whole length of Siberia, reaching over an extent of many thousand kös without a single break, until it reaches the ice of the Arctic Ocean, where it slopes down to the level of the sea, and terminates.

We reached the foot of this mountain-chain just after mid-day, so we halted for the remainder of the day and through the night, that our horses might have

time to rest. On the following morning, before sunrise, the horses were saddled in a new fashion, one of the girths being fastened across the breast, and the other round the body, close to the forelegs. In the meantime, we prepared to ascend the mountain on foot. The horses followed, one after another, treading warily and cautiously, so that not one of them was caught in a thicket, or slipped into a crevice of the rock, or a hollow filled with water. If they had made a single false step, they would have fallen down a frightful abyss, and been crushed so that no bone would have been left unbroken.

After thirteen or fourteen hours spent in the ascent, we found that we had reached the summit of the mountain. Here it was quite cool, and there were no flies and wasps to torment us. We halted two hours, by which time we were nearly frozen with cold. Seen from this point, all the mountains which had previously appeared of a very respectable height, looked like low insignificant hills; and the many broad rivers which have their source in these Dschugdschur mountains, were flowing down the sides in narrow glittering silver threads.

On a wet day, when the rain-clouds hover in the air like fog, they are torn asunder by the summits of the Dschugdschur, and the separate masses float about like porridge of meal and bark. Any one standing on the peak which breaks the clouds, may see how a dew-drop or rain-drop falls on the sharp edge of a stone that lies beneath it; how it is divided into parts, and trickles a scarcely visible droplet down either side. Hence the thought arises, how the drops that trickle down to the east are followed and overtaken by others, until they flow on in a hairbreadth line, and so grow into a murmuring brook, gradually increasing and mingling with other brooklets—the murmuring brook becomes a rushing stream, and at length a mighty river, which loses itself in the boundless, never-frozen Pacific Ocean. Here it is tossed about through countless ages, mixing with the waters of every known sea.

The remainder of the drops of which I speak, take a different direction, and in like manner flow westward to increase the stream of that great river the Lena. Journeying along the course of it, you come to the Arctic Ocean. Here it becomes ice, and forms a barrier which no human thought and no human power can overcome.

A R A R A A V I S.

IN the city of Damascus—that ancient city whence came Eleazer, the faithful servant of Abraham—that city of narrow streets and riderless donkeys—that eastern paradise, where hours glide about like ghouls under cover of their hideous veils, and keep all their sweetness and beauty for the especial behoof of Blue Beards—that grand resort of straw-hatted travellers with fabulous wealth in gold—even there, O reader, once upon a time, there dwelt a Turk! That, I grant, was nothing uncommon; but then this Turk possessed a slave, which is also no uncommon circumstance, and this slave was outwardly black—so black, that his shadow always left a dark mark upon the wall (at least so tradition says); and what is more remarkable still, he hated falsehood, and loved the truth. Now this, you must admit, if you have any knowledge of an African, was a most astonishing phenomenon; so much so, that, in comparison with it, all the recent discoveries of science sink into insignificance. It is far easier to conceive that the old theory about the composition of the moon, with regard to cheese of a particular colour may be true, than to conjure up a nigger whose only weak point was a stringent adhesion to truth.

Sometimes we hear of what philosophers, or naturalists, or botanists term a *lusus nature*—an

extraordinary freak in nature, by which a fig-tree produces pomegranates, or an onion-plant yields a potato. Just such another phenomenon was this Selim, the black slave, who had as great an aversion to anything bordering on an untruth, as a timid old lady might have to a rattlesnake. And this, strange as it may seem, was the head and front of his offending, the block in his uneven path through life, over which he was continually stumbling and grievously bruising his shins.

His proprietor—who might have been a descendant of Baron Munchausen, judging from his peculiar failing in the baron's line—often but vainly lamented Selim's veracity. In every other respect, he was the model of what a slave ought to be: docile, obedient, attentive to the smallest wants of his master; none could equal him in replenishing a pipe, fetching a piece of fire, or making a brew of Turkish coffee. But, as is the custom in Damascus, Selim invariably accompanied the Turk on all out-of-door excursions, whether to the gardens to make kief, or to a friend's house to smoke the pipe of repose. As is also the practice, servants and slaves always on these occasions remained in the room, mingling ever and anon, with all due respect, in the current topic of conversation. Hence it arose that, whenever the old Turk indulged in flights of imagination, he was suddenly and uncere- moniously checked, and ignominiously exposed, by his slave deliberately giving him the lie.

In vain had the master remonstrated with him; in vain had he punched his head and cuffed his ears; in vain, finding all simple remedies fail, had he resorted to the application of the corbush and bastinado, and even threatened the torture of a red-hot iron skull-cap. Selim, under suffering, always promised submission; but no sooner had the pains and scars of the last chastisement subsided, than he relapsed into a tenfold state of veracity; and the old Turk, outraged beyond measure at being continually thwarted in his hobby, finally came to the determination of selling this incorrigible black, and thus easing his conscience of a most unpleasant mentor.

Accordingly, the public auctioneer of the town was summoned, and the Turk taking him aside, entered into full details as to the character and capabilities of the slave; candidly revealing the real cause of his dissatisfaction with him, and urging the necessity of his being disposed of at any price offered by the first bidder.

Selim was accordingly transferred to the slave-market; but, for some reason or other—very possibly a knowledge of his failing had got wind—purchasers, though they paused to look at him, passed on, and made no offer.

At last, one pleasant-looking old Turkish effendi, struck by the intelligence of Selim's face, and the goodly proportion of his limbs, paused and inquired the price. The auctioneer fixed upon a sum so absurdly beneath the current value of like saleable goods, that the old effendi was startled, and begged to be informed as to the failing of the slave. The auctioneer acknowledged that he had one great failing, but that he was not at liberty to state what that was until after the bargain was closed.

'Does he steal?' asked the effendi.

'No; as honest as an ulema.'

'Does he drink then?'

'No; as sober as a dervish.'

'Is he indolent and lazy?'

'On the contrary, as active and as nimble as a flea.'

'Not steal, not drink, and not lazy. Why,' muttered the effendi, 'there cannot be much wrong with the slave who is free from these failings.'

Accordingly, the bargain was soon concluded; and when the auctioneer told him the real state of affairs,

the old effendi congratulated himself mightily, and chuckled over the prize.

'Ilhumdel! Allah!' quoth he, 'lying is a thing I detest; and most assuredly this slave will never have occasion to correct.'

Selim being conducted home to the house of his new master, and there duly installed, was summoned into the effendi's presence.

'Selim,' said he, 'I am aware, as you know, of the cause of your late master's dissatisfaction, but as I abhor all deviation from the truth myself, I have but little to fear from your propensity. I wish you to understand, however, that, on the other hand, I never brook any impertinent contradiction from my slaves—not even when I am alone, much less in the presence of strangers. Now, bear this in mind, for disobedience will be visited by punishment, to which all you have hitherto suffered will be mere flea-bites.'

The unhappy negro, who entertained a very keen recollection of the last hundred and fifty stripes, winced terribly at the information; when, to encourage him, his master proceeded:

'If, on the other hand, I find you act up to my wishes, I promise you a complete new suit of the finest cloth, with red cap and slippers to match—such, mashalla! as no other slave in Damascus ever sported.'

This was touching upon a very tender chord with Selim; if he had one great weakness, it was the love of dress. He was, like most of his ugly countrymen, who the more intensely black and distorted they are, are the more puffed up with inconceivable vanity; so he mentally determined to make one strenuous effort to overcome his awful propensity.

For some time, things went on smoothly enough, though the slave very soon discovered, much to his regret, that his new master, notwithstanding all his assertions to the contrary, was a tolerably good hand at drawing the long-bow. Nevertheless, the inducement to silence was a great one, and Selim managed to bottle up his effervescing truth for a considerable interval. The clothes were almost within his grasp.

One day the effendi was invited out to a dinner at some great Turk's, and, having duly warned the slave, went at the hour appointed. It was a very great affair indeed, for the windows were all closed, and the Koran hidden under a divan-cushion—just for conscience' sake, I suppose. Then these sons of Islam made great havoc with half-a-dozen bottles of the strongest spirits, which they, after a manner, diluted by eating an unconscionable amount of raw cucumbers and salt. After that, a sumptuous dinner was served, and partaken of. Then came pipes and coffee; and under all these combined influences, the usually silent tongues of the assembled effendis relaxed into garrulous conversation.

The topics were various, but diverged gradually into the one channel of self. Whether it was the spirits, or the cucumbers, or the good dinner that did it, I am unable to say; possibly, under their combined influence, the usual precaution of the slave's master was forgotten, and he felt himself puffed up with pride, and labouring under the notion that he possessed fabulous wealth—which was a sad hallucination.

After various startling assertions on the part of others, Selim's master, who had lately erected a low shed, proclaimed very pompously that he had lately built a house which was at least forty yards long!

Hereupon Selim, who was standing exactly in front of him, and who could not possibly swallow this enormity without bursting, began twitching his hands and undoing the buttons of his tight jacket after a most alarming fashion, which not only attracted the notice of strangers, but very much terrified his master.

After a brief and awkward pause, one of the party returning to the charge, begged to be informed of the breadth of this new building.

'Two feet!' replied the conscience-stricken effendi,

much to the astonishment of his listeners. This assertion pacified any qualms that Selim entertained; but the host inquired innocently what such a building might serve for.

'Why, you see,' said the effendi, 'I had fully intended building a house as broad as it was long, but that scoundrel of a slave there thwarted me in my purpose, and instead of a *Château en Espagne*, I have been obliged to content myself with a brick-wall.'

This restored immediate good-humour to the party; and Selim astonished himself and the natives by appearing next week in his promised suit of finery.

A WALK IN WATLING STREET.

WHILST in Shropshire during the past autumn, I resolved to put in force an old intention, and visit Wroxeter—the Uriconium of the Romans. I had first repaired to the museum in Shrewsbury, to see if any relics were preserved there of this once considerable city. I found some few, but, what was of more account, a most intelligent friend in one of the curators—I chatted the matter over, and agreed to visit the old Roman site together. We fixed the morrow—a day in the end of September—and for starting, the hour of noon.

It should have been an earlier one, considering the lengthened walk which lay before us, and what we had to see; but from the meagre accounts I had read, and from what little had been told me, I fancied our antiquarian labours would be summed up when we had looked at the celebrated fragment of the old Roman wall, and sought for a few coins in the cottages of the surrounding peasantry. I was thus wholly unprepared for the extent, variety, and massiveness of the remains; the fragments of pottery, broken shafts, pediments, and bases of columns, colossal heads sculptured out of the coarse red sandstone of the district, portions of friezes, and much other fragmentary evidence of a considerable city, a civilised people, and extensive public buildings that were adorned, if not in the highest style of art, at least with some skill, and with the well-known taste of the conquerors of the world.

It was two o'clock before we could manage to start. Then with light hearts, and much enthusiasm as to the purpose in view, we set out from the good old town of Shrewsbury; over the Severn, past the old abbey, and so away till nothing but the country lay around us, bathed in the splendid glory of the autumn afternoon. At the distance of about two miles from the town, we came again in sight of the Severn, now rolling far below the steep road-bank; the other shore more level, and stretching away in picturesque undulating meadowland, to the fine woods about Haughmond Abbey. On this bank we rested for a time, the heat being extreme; and a more lovely spot for a 'traveller's rest' we could not have chosen, had we searched England through; for the noble river, as though conscious of its own magnificence, swept majestically onwards in curves and windings of great width, sometimes dark from excessive depth, sometimes clear as a mirror, where it rolled over gravelly shallows, or purled round tiny islands, formed by the droughts of summer. By and by, we went onwards; again crossed the Severn at Atcham Bridge, where there is another exquisite river-scene, and an old country churchyard dipping thereto, of exceeding picturesqueness and stillness. About a mile beyond, we stayed at one of the lodges of Attingham Park to inquire our way. The woman who answered us pointed to a silvan-looking lane opposite, down which we turned, and were soon in the pleasant shadows of the overarching trees. Some distance down this, we turned at right angles into a lane still narrower, and began to ascend. In a moment or two I stopped, and pointed to the ground. 'We are quite right,' I said; 'this is the Roman road;' and most certainly here was

the adamantine floor of concrete and small pebbles which, some sixteen hundred years ago, the many-nationed legionaries had made and trod. It was a fragment of one of the great military ways which crossed Britain from Dover to Chester, and named afterwards, by the Saxons, Watling Street. As we passed on, we could see how it was raised above the adjacent land—as the Roman roads always were—and looking just as I had seen the same great highway twenty times before, stealing its way amidst the solitary hills of northern Shropshire and parts of Radnorshire.

We stayed by a low stile, perfectly garlanded by a wealth of woodbine flowers, to take another look at the splendid river, which here flowing to our right, and almost as wide as the Thames at London Bridge, was decked with wooded as well as lawn-like islands of considerable size. To this the meadows near us dipped by a steep descent, and, altogether, my eyes had never looked upon so splendid a scene; for, as in all mountain views, great depth and shallowness lay in contiguity, thus giving effects of light and shade, of stillness and motion, which, in the full richness of an autumn afternoon, a great artist could alone appreciate.

We had already resolved to call upon Mr Stanier, a wealthy gentleman of the district, who possesses some few of the relics preserved from Uriconium, and who exhibited a very good though small collection of Roman lamps and pottery at the meeting of the Archaeological Institute in Shrewsbury in 1855. We therefore proceeded to find out his residence, but, presuming it to be more within the village than it was, we passed onwards towards the picturesque church, the spire of which we could see in the distance. Turning my head, as we went by a gate leading into a large level field from which the corn had been newly carried, and on whose opposite side stood a recently erected and somewhat unsightly red brick farmhouse, with extensive out-buildings, something most singular instantly attracted my gaze. In the peculiar light of the waning sun, and as we stood—which was, as it were, sideways to it—this something had all the effect of a vast screen raised against the sky. 'That must be the Roman wall,' said I; 'nothing but that could stand out in such marvellous relief!' My companion dissented; but still retaining my opinion, we proceeded, and soon learned that we must retrace our steps, as we had already passed Mr Stanier's residence. As we did this, again the gigantic mass loomed in sight, with an effect upon me the strangest in the world. I could no longer think I stood on the highway of a solitary English hamlet, with the drowsy hush of the autumn afternoon round me; but in city streets, in the precincts of temples, basilicae, and amphitheatre, and with the mingled tongues of conquerors and conquered sounding in my ears!

Mr Stanier was out shooting, but might be home by and by; Mrs Stanier was an invalid, but she very politely sent a servant with us; and we were soon across the great stubble-field, and in the yard of the new-built farm. My conjecture had been correct; it was the wall I had seen; and here our attendant left us. Another lane to cross, another gate to open, and there, in the midst of an immense field, just cleared from its recent corn, stood the vast mass of imperishable masonry. The field slightly ascends, though not in a degree to be called an acclivity; and up this we toiled, very warm, and very glad to reach such shadow as the wall cast, though that was but slight as the sun then stood.

We sat down upon the stubble and contemplated what was before us. We were not solitary, for though reapers and gleaners were all gone, a man and boy were at work about it, digging a foundation for a slight iron fence, to be put round for its better protection. This had been subscribed for at the meeting of the

Archæological Institute in the preceding year, and stands forth as a creditable exception to the utter disregard generally shewn to our national monuments. This circumstance, simple as it was, was so far fortunate, as it enabled me to judge for myself of the extraordinary character of the soil, as the man had cleared out several holes to a considerable depth. From the top to the bottom of these, indeed wherever he might dig, was the same intensely black mould, pulverised to an extreme degree of fineness, and as free from all extraneous matter, except some few bones, and scattered fragments of the wall, as though passed through a miller's bolting-cloth. I observed the same thing afterwards at some distance from the wall, and in an adjacent lane, and the labourer told me that the same peculiarity extended as far as the surrounding fields.

'You get unusual crops,' said I, 'and in spring can distinguish them by their more intense greenness?'

'Yes, that's all true,' was the answer. 'It's a wonderful piece of land; and just below plough-depth, foundations and ruins lie as thick as can be. The soil's been cleared for farming, that's all.'

I then asked if the cause of this dust-like fineness and richness could be accounted for, but the man shook his head; and after picking up for me some few pieces of the imperishable tiles—of which there are three courses in the wall—he resumed his spade. Unless artificially prepared—a thing scarcely possible for such a depth and extent of land—fire on more than one occasion must have performed an important part in this attrition of the soil, and in reducing its original elements to a state of carbon. It is certainly not unusual to find the lower levels of Roman sites indicating, by the blackness of the soil, traces of extensive conflagration, and countless instances are known to antiquaries; it is only in connection with extreme friability and dryness that the fact here assumes a new and singular aspect. The city was a very extensive one, and a fire may have wasted it for many successive days, and brought down together, in one smouldering heap, both public buildings and domestic dwellings; the profusion of wood-work, which, as it is generally assumed, formed the upper portion of Roman houses, aiding the devastation.

So many conjectures have been made relative to the class of building to which this massive old fragment of masonry may be referred, as prove that antiquaries are entirely at fault. By some it is said to have formed part of a *castrum* or citadel, by others variously as the fragment of a temple, a public granary, or a bath. But there seems little to strengthen the conjecture that it ever formed portion of a citadel, as it does not stand immediately contiguous to the Severn, or any assumed point of defence; though the masonry bears certainly a great likeness to what remains of the Roman *castrum* on the coast of Kent, being stone-work with layers of tiles between at regular intervals. For centuries, moreover, this almost imperishable fragment has been styled by the peasantry of the neighbourhood, 'the old works,' thus pointing to a Saxon nomenclature, and to its traditional use as a military defence.

Be this as it may with respect to its history, there I paced round and round it, on that golden afternoon, very full of thought, and deeply interested. It was plain to see that the old masonry had formed part of an interior wall, and had trended with some building in a somewhat circular form. In the upper portion are holes through it, as though for the support of scaffolding; other brickwork has rested against sections of the lower part, and what is now a mere broken gap through the middle of the wall, has once evidently formed an arch. Two others were distinctly visible about 180 years ago.

Bringing our tiles with us, we left the old wall, and

repaired to the cottage of the labourer I had just been talking to—his wife having a few old coins in her possession, which he had picked up from time to time. These have been found in large abundance on the site of Uriconium; but from what I could hear, and have seen, they have been mostly of comparatively little value—simply small bronze denarii of the period of the lower empire. Occasionally, larger specimens have been found, as one in brass of the reign of Trajan, imbedded in the old wall; but the hoards said to be possessed by many of the villagers have little intrinsic value in relation to either Roman art or history, beyond what association may create, or what the spirit of a kind of Jonathan Oldbuck sort of dilettanteism—namely, a reverence for everything *because* it is old—may impart. With this phase of antiquarian taste, I have not the remotest sympathy; I only value archæology for its power of throwing new light on the historical past; and for shewing, with all its gaps and lost links, how continuous has been the thread of a progressive causation in human history. There can be no doubt that it is these historical bearings that is making archæology the popular study it is at present. Till men have given finality to much of historic truth, this must continue to be the case; and this finality seems to be a very remote thing in relation to British history. Since the publication of the Faussett papers, under the editorship of Mr Roach Smith, our greatest Saxon scholar has said that he must in a large measure re-write his well-known Saxon history, as the discoveries made in Saxon graves wholly invalidate many of his theories and assumptions. In like manner, other discoveries will serve to overthrow much which at the present date is mis-called history; and there can be but little doubt that when the archæologists have done a portion of the work which lies for them to do, there will arise—as there always arises when a point of the kind is needed—a special class of inductionists to draw the threads of historic truth together.

When we had chatted a while, the good woman went upstairs, and bringing down a little strip of rag tied about with cotton, produced her 'dinders,' as they are locally called. They were very small; of bronze, much worn, and oxidised. Selecting one, with the inscription illegible, but with the head of a helmeted soldier thereon, very good in its way, and as fresh as though newly from the mint, I made it mine, and we then retraced our steps a short distance in the village, the waning sun giving us warning that we had much to see, and but a brief time for so doing.

Once in the highway and amid scattered cottages, it was plain to see to what use the ruins of Uriconium had been turned. In the walls and porch of the most picturesque of village churches were to be seen fragments of Roman tiles; better-class dwellings, labourers' cottages, pigsties, garden-walls, and the enclosure of a piece of waste land—itsself heaped up with Roman debris—had been alike built out of the same exhaustless quarry; and masses of finely shaped stone-work, which needed no near inspection to shew the still fresh traces of the legionary's gauge and chisel, bounded the road or secured a dung-heap. As was said when the members of the Archæological Institute went over the site of Uriconium in 1856, it seemed to be a matter of necessity that every fragment of a column turned up should be split and formed into a coping-stone for a wall.

A message delivered to us in the early part of the afternoon, invited us to see some remains at a gentleman's house next the church. Proceeding thither, we found on the lawn some noble columnar fragments, pediments, and bases, matching evidently with fragments of the same kind that we saw almost immediately after in the grounds of Mr Stanier. Some of these masses were decorated with a scale pattern, others with the ordinary flute. A portion of these

were placed about a large centre flower-bed, redolent of the scent of geraniums and heliotropes, where they supported fragments of Samian ware—none of it, though, of very high quality—broken lamps, Roman glass, and other kinds of pottery. It was singular to find fragments of vessels of the black ware called Upchurch pottery at this remote distance from the banks of the Medway; and the fact shews how intimate and constant was the commercial relation between one part of Roman Britain and another. This black hue was effected during the process of baking, and might not have been peculiar as a branch of ceramic art to the Upchurch potteries solely, still both pattern and shape gave additional evidence. My own idea is, that the Staffordshire potteries date from a Celtic period, and that in the hands of the Romans, they were extensively worked, and supplied the adjacent districts with a profusion of earthen vessels, that has had no parallel except in our own day. The most unique relic was a red-earth vase of large size, of coarse workmanship and clay, but most rare as to shape. I have seen nothing like it elsewhere, and yet it was undoubtedly Roman; and what has since struck me as very singular, might have almost served Wedgwood as a model for one of his peculiar shapes. It is a well-known fact, that our illustrious English potter was intimate with several of the best antiquaries of his time, and occasionally received presents of Roman ware from Major Rooke and others. Thus, from some source of the kind may have arisen the flanged rimmed vase peculiar to collections of Wedgwood-ware, and so common on shelves and mantel-pieces sixty years ago.

The evening had waned more and more, and twilight was almost come; we therefore gave up all hope of seeing more of the village, and retraced our steps to Mr Stanier's. That gentleman had not returned, so I had the misfortune of losing the sight of his small but unique collection of pottery. In a *mortarium* in the hall were a few fragments of various-shaped vessels; through these I looked as well as the fading light would let me, and then hastened to the lawn. Here, set about in various places, were still more beautiful fragments of pillars, with their bases and pediments, than any we had yet seen, besides many other massive relics in sculptured stone-work. A sort of alcove on one of the winding terraces leading down to the river was entirely formed by the latter; whilst above it, almost covered with ivy, was set a colossal head of one of the Roman deities.

The scenery from this lawn and its terraces is beautiful in the extreme; nothing that I have ever seen of English landscape exceeds it. As I turned away in the softened twilight, the last traces of the sun lying here and there in molten patches on the water and its green-turfed islands, I could but think how, after all, the beauty of nature transcends the art of man; and that if, through the mischances of barbarism and ages of ignorance, treasures were lost to us that neither time nor conjecture could restore, the same magnificent environment was still ours as had witnessed the civilisation of our Roman fathers.

Along Watling Street, through the gloom of the wooded lane, we reached the highway. At Atcham Bridge we were fortunate enough to be overtaken by a return chaise: by the aid of this we reached the cheerful light of the town much earlier than we should otherwise have done.

The relics discovered from time to time of Uriconium have been considerable, though too many of them have been scattered and lost. The compass of the city, and fortress was about three miles, and within a space such as this, accident, if not research, must have brought countless things to light. Sepulchral remains, hypocausts, moulds for forging money, an oculist's stamp, have been among the spoil. A

few small bronzes have been found, but from the accounts that have reached us, and from what I have seen, they belong to a debased stage of art. The best things preserved in the museum at Shrewsbury is an altar, formed of the red sandstone of the district. The specimen of a sepulchral urn, enclosed in a case of lead, is likewise most unique and rare.

HUMBOLDT AT HOME.

MR BAYARD TAYLOR has communicated to the *New York Tribune* some very interesting details of a visit he paid to Alexander von Humboldt in November last. While in Berlin, the philosopher lives with his servant Seifert, whose name is on the door of the house, a plain two-story building, with a dull red front, and inhabited by several families. On the second floor there is another name—'Alexander von Humboldt.' Seifert opened the door to the visitor, and shewed him into a room filled with objects of natural history, then into a library, and lastly into the study.

'Seifert went to an inner door, announced my name, and Humboldt immediately appeared. He came up to me with a heartiness and cordiality which made me feel that I was in the presence of a friend, gave me his hand, and inquired whether we should converse in English or German. "Your letter," said he, "was that of a German, and you must certainly speak the language familiarly; but I am also in the constant habit of using English." He insisted on my taking one end of the green sofa, observing that he rarely sat upon it himself; then drew up a plain cane-bottomed chair and seated himself beside it, asking me to speak a little louder than usual, as his hearing was not so acute as formerly.

'The first impression made by Humboldt's face is that of a broad and genial humanity. His massive brow, heavy with the gathered wisdom of nearly a century, bends forward and overhangs his breast, like a ripe ear of corn; but as you look below it, a pair of clear blue eyes, almost as bright and steady as a child's, meet your own. In those eyes, you read that trust in man, that immortal youth of the heart, which make the snows of eighty-seven winters lie so lightly upon his head. You trust him utterly at the first glance, and you feel that he will trust you, if you are worthy of it. I had approached him with a natural feeling of reverence, but in five minutes I found that I loved him, and could talk with him as freely as with a friend of my own age. His nose, mouth, and chin, have the heavy Teutonic character, whose genuine type always expresses an honest simplicity and directness.

'I was most surprised by the youthful character of his face. I knew that he had been frequently indisposed during the present year, and had been told that he was beginning to shew the marks of his extreme age; but I should not have suspected him of being over seventy-five. His wrinkles are few and small, and his skin has a smoothness and delicacy rarely seen in old men. His hair, although snow white, is still abundant, his steps slow but firm, and his manner active almost to restlessness. He sleeps but four hours out of twenty-four, reads and replies to his daily rain of letters, and suffers no single occurrence of the least interest in any part of the world to escape his attention. I could not perceive that his memory, the first mental faculty to shew decay, is at all impaired. He talks rapidly, with the greatest apparent ease, never hesitating for a word, whether in English or German, and, in fact, seemed to be unconscious which language he was using, as he changed five or six times in the course of the conversation. He did not remain in his chair more than ten minutes at a time, frequently getting up and walking about the room, now and then pointing to a picture, or opening a book to illustrate some remark.'

The two travellers talked about the countries they had visited; Humboldt remarking that, like his visitor, he had preserved his health everywhere; and that during five years in South America and the West Indies, he had passed through the midst of black vomit and yellow fever untouched. He gave some advice as to travelling in the Russian-Tatar provinces of Central Asia; and described the

Khirkies as a very interesting people, partly Boodhist and partly Mussulman, their monkish sects following the clans in their wanderings, and performing their religious ceremonies in the encampments within a circle marked out by spears.

The Altai Mountains led him to speak of the Andes, and compare them with the Himalaya, giving the preference to the former in point of grandeur. "You remember Orizaba," continued he; "here is an engraving from a rough sketch of mine. I hope you will find it correct." He rose and took down the illustrated folio which accompanied the last edition of his *Minor Writings*, turned over the leaves, and recalled, at each plate, some reminiscence of his American travel. "I still think," he remarked, as he closed the book, "Chimborazo is the grandest mountain in the world."

'Among the objects in his study was a living chameleon, in a box with a glass lid. The animal, which was about six inches long, was lazily dozing on a bed of sand, with a big blue fly—the unconscious provision for his dinner—perched upon his back. "He has just been sent to me from Smyrna," said Humboldt; "he is very listless and unconcerned in his manner." Just then the chameleon opened one of his long, tubular eyes, and looked up at us. "A peculiarity of this animal," he continued, "is its power of looking in different directions at the same time. He can turn one eye toward heaven, while the other inspects the earth. There are many clergymen who have the same power."

The conversation then turned upon American affairs, with which Humboldt appeared to be quite familiar. 'He also spoke of our authors, and inquired particularly after Washington Irving, whom he had once seen. I told him I had the fortune to know Mr Irving, and had seen him not long before leaving New York. "He must be at least fifty years old," said Humboldt. "He is seventy," I answered, "but as young as ever." "Ah!" said he, "I have lived so long, that I have almost lost the consciousness of time. I belong to the age of Jefferson and Gallatin, and I heard of Washington's death while travelling in South America."

"I have repeated but the smallest portion of his conversation, which flowed on in an uninterrupted stream of the richest knowledge. On recalling it to my mind, after leaving, I was surprised to find how great a number of subjects he had touched upon, and how much he had said, or seemed to have said—for he has the rare faculty of placing a subject in the clearest and most vivid light by a few luminous words—concerning each. He thought, as he talked, without effort. I should compare his brain to the fountain of Vaucluse—a still, deep, and tranquil pool, without a ripple on its surface, but creating a river by its overflow. He asked me many questions, but did not always wait for an answer, the question itself suggesting some reminiscence, or some thought which he had evident pleasure in expressing. I sat or walked, following his movements, an eager listener, and speaking in alternate English and German, until the time which he had granted to me had expired. Seifert at length reappeared, and said to him, in a manner at once respectful and familiar: "It is time;" and I took my leave.

"You have travelled much, and seen many ruins," said Humboldt, as he gave me his hand again; "now you have seen one more." "Not a ruin," I could not help replying, "but a pyramid." For I pressed the hand which had touched those of Frederick the Great, of Forster, the companion of Captain Cook, of Klopstock and Schiller, of Pitt, Napoleon, Josephine, the marshals of the Empire, Jefferson, Hamilton, Wieland, Herder, Goethe, Cuvier, La Place, Guy-Lussac, Beethoven, Walter Scott—in short, of every great man whom Europe has produced for three-quarters of a century. I looked into the eyes which had not only seen this living history of the world pass by, scene after scene, till the actors retired one by one, to return no more, but had beheld the cataract of Atures and the forests of the Cassiquiare, Chimborazo, the Amazon and Popocatepetl, the Altai Alps of Siberia, the Tatar steppes, and the Caspian Sea. Such a splendid circle of experience well befits a life of such generous devotion to science. I have never seen so sublime an

example of old age—crowned with imperishable success, full of the richest wisdom, cheered and sweetened by the noblest attributes of the heart. A ruin indeed! No: a human temple, perfect as the Parthenon.'

G O N E.

Listr to the midnight lone!

The church-clock speaketh with a solemn tone:

Doth it no more than tell the time?

Hark, from that belfry gray,

In each deep-booming chime which, slow and clear,

Beats like a measured knell upon my ear,

A stern voice seems to say:

Gone—gone;

The hour is gone—the day is gone:

Pray.

The air is hushed again,

But the mute darkness woos to sleep in vain.

O soul! we have slept too long,

Yea, dreamed the morn away,

In visions false and feverish unrest

Wasting the work-time God hath given and blest.

Conscience grows pale to see

How, like a haunting face,

My youth stares at me out of gloom profound,

With rayless eyes blank as the darkness round.

And wailing lips which say:

Gone—gone;

The morn is gone—the morn is gone:

Pray.

Wo for the wasted years

Born bright with smiles, but buried with sad tears!

Their tombs have been prepared

By Time, that graveman gray.—

Soul, we may weep to count each mournful stone,

And read the epitaph engraved thereon

By that stern carver's hand.

Yet weep not long, for Hope,

Steadfast and calm, beside each headstone stands,

Gazing on Time, with upward-pointing hands.

Take we this happy sign,

Up! let us work—and pray.

Thou, in whose sight the hoary ages fly

Swift as a summer's noon, yet whose stern eye

Doth note each moment lost,

So let me live that not one hour misspent

May rise in judgment on me, penitent,

But, till the sunset, Lord,

So in Thy vineyard toil,

That every hour a priceless gem may be

To crown the blind brows of Eternity. M. A. D.

ANTIQUITY OF BLACK-PUDDINGS.

Even black-puddings were not only tolerated, but were fashionable; and when the throat of the ox was, as usual, cut nearly from ear to ear, the blood was caught to make a dish which was thought worthy of figuring in the kitchen of King Remeses. The mode of cutting the throat is still required, by Moslem law, in Egypt; but to eat the blood is unlawful. It was this custom of the country they had just left that made the Hebrew legislator so often warn the Israelites against eating the blood of animals; for while some of the Mosaic laws were in accordance with the patriarchal habits of their forefathers, many were directly introduced in order to correct abuses they had adopted during their sojourn in Egypt.—*Wilkinson's Egyptians in the Time of the Pharaohs.*

'GLIMPSES OF AFFAIRS IN AMERICA.'

Circumstances have obliged us to defer till next week the *Glimpse* prepared for the present Number.

Printed and Published by W. and R. CHAMBERS, 47 Paternoster Row, LONDON, and 339 High Street, EDINBURGH. Also sold by JAMES FRASER, 14 D'Olier Street, DUBLIN, and all Booksellers.